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The situation in the Middle East

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Letter dated 29 June 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 24 May 2000 Israel withdrew its forces from Southern Lebanon, in full accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). The withdrawal was confirmed by the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council dated 16 June 2000 (S/2000/590 and Corr.1). The Security Council, in turn, welcomed the report and endorsed its conclusion, in the Council's Presidential statement dated 18 June 2000 (S/PRST/2000/21). As is widely known, Security Council resolution 425 (1978), in addition to calling for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, also calls for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority of the Government of Lebanon in the area.

Regrettably, the Government of Lebanon has, to date, refused to fulfil its responsibilities under resolution 425 (1978) and to establish its effective authority in the area. As a result, the area is witnessing an escalating wave of violence on the Lebanese side of the border, directed against Israel. Objects hurled over the border at passing Israelis, including farmers working in their fields, attempts to penetrate into Israel, along with a host of other targeted provocations have become commonplace along the southern border of Lebanon. The Government of Lebanon has made no attempt to prevent or control such incidents. Indeed, the Lebanese army has not even taken up positions in the area. For that matter, Lebanon has yet to disarm the militia groups operating in its territory.

This regrettable situation came to a climax on 24 June 2000, when dozens of demonstrators gathered beside the "Fatma gate", on the Lebanese side of the international border between Israel and Lebanon, close to the Israeli town of Metulah. The demonstration turned violent as heavy stones and objects were hurled over the border, aimed at Israelis on the other side. In addition, there were repeated attempts to climb over the fence and illegally infiltrate into the Israeli side of the border.

Two individuals from the Lebanese side actually penetrated into Israel. When they pressed further despite repeated warnings, Israeli soldiers were faced with no alternative but to use force to stop them. Clearly, this incident would never have

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occurred had the two not illegally infiltrated into Israeli territory, and proceeded against IDF warnings.

In refusing to fulfil its obligations pursuant to resolution 425 (1978), Lebanon is thereby failing in its basic international duty, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, to ensure that its sovereign territory does not serve to harm the territory of a neighbouring State.

Now that Israel has withdrawn its forces, it remains for the other parties, chiefly the Government of Lebanon, to fulfil their remaining responsibilities under resolution 425 (1978). The Government of Lebanon is required to take all necessary steps to prevent the continued flare-ups, infiltrations and provocations, and to assume full responsibility over Lebanon. That includes doing everything in its power to end acts of hostility against Israel and Israelis across the border.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 43, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Aaron **Jacob**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.